Evidence Comparison

Instances when you compare evidence: Evidence conflicts but you need yours to be won. Weigh between claims, even when they’re on different arguments. Use the strength of your evidence to defend against attacks against yours. Use the validity of your evidence to attack your opponent’s claims.

Evidence strengthens claims that debaters cannot make with credibility. The essential justification for evidence is that somebody else can make it. Evidence reflects real world discussion on a topic. Evidence promotes research on the topic.

Types of evidence: analytical and empirical. Among empirics, there are facts and studies. Analytical evidence tries to make prescriptive arguments about what should be done absent what has happened in the world. Different types of claims require different types of evidence.

Methods of comparison:

Timeframe – more recent evidence is better if you can show why something relevant has happened between the cards that makes yours a better card. You can sometimes make the argument that an older card is better if there was something more relevant in the past.

Author credentials – don’t judge everything by the kind of school the professor teaches at. The professor’s field of study matters as does the author’s experience on the topic.

Type of source – websites, blogs, newspapers and magazines. Cards from qualified leaders can either be in books (long-articles) or empty opinion-filled books.

Substance of the argument – How specific is the card to the link story? Is the evidence specific to the link? Is your author making a stronger claim than your opponent’s author? Who has developed their warrants the most? How many examples are given?

Weighing between causal evidence – How large is the sample size? How diverse is the sample size? How representative is it of the overall population? What was the selection method? Is there a selection bias in the study? Is the study double-blind?

Robustness – how resistant the study is to error.

P value – the probability that you would get results just as extreme as the one you got given the null hypothesis. Lower is better.

Controlling for variables – make alternate causality arguments and justify why the lack-of-control could influence the study.